

Housing Needs Assessment WILLIAMSTOWN, MA



April 2013

Prepared for the
WILLIAMSTOWN AFFORDABLE
HOUSING COMMITTEE

Prepared by
John Ryan
DEVELOPMENT CYCLES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....2

1. Purpose of Study	2
2. Sources & Contacts	2
3. Important Note on Tables	4
4. Report Information	5
5. Key Limitations	5

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS & TRENDS.....6

1. Population	6
2. Economic Conditions	7
3. Housing Characteristics	9
4. Renter Characteristics	12
5. Owner Characteristics	16
6. Senior Characteristics	19
7. Special Needs Characteristics	22
8. Subsidized Housing	23
9. Current Market Conditions: Rental Housing	27
10. Current Market Conditions: For Sale Housing	29
11. Home Values & Property Condition	34
12. The Spruces Mobile Home Park	35
13. Potential Developments: Cable Mills	36
14. Summary of Existing Conditions	37

III. NEEDS ASSESSMENT.....39

1. Williamstown's Market Area Context	39
2. Projecting Demographic & Economic Trends	41
3. Local Perspectives	43
4. Housing Needs	44
5. Options to Address Needs	53

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of Study

The Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee (WAHC) engaged consultant John Ryan, Principal of DEVELOPMENT CYCLES located in East Montpelier, VT to prepare an assessment of the current and future needs for affordable housing in the Town of Williamstown. The study has a number of purposes, including the following:

- To provide baseline information for future planning and funding decisions made by the WAHC, the Community Preservation Committee, and others in Town Government regarding the affordable housing needs of the community
- To provide guidance to current efforts to address the dislocation and loss of housing resulting from the flooding of the Spruces Mobile Home Park; and
- To examine the market potential of certain sites to address current or future affordable housing needs.

2. Sources & Contacts

The following lists the key sources and contacts used to conduct this analysis:

- 2000 and 2010 US Census
- 2011 American Community Survey
- Williamstown Appraiser's Office Housing Condition and Sales reports
- HUD's Household Income Data
- The Warren Group's Home Sales Data
- MLS Homes on Market
- Craigslist, The Berkshire Eagle and the North Adams Transcript Apartment for Rent
- Mass Housing Partnership's Housing Cost Calculator
- MA Division of Labor & Workforce Development Employment Data

Key persons interviewed include:

- Bill Barkin, Assessor, Town of Williamstown
- Al Bashevkin, Executive Director, Northern Berkshire County Coalition
- Kim Burnham, Burnham Gold Real Estate
- Dave Carver, Director of Development, Scarafoni Associates
- MaryLee Daniels, Area Director, MA Dept of Developmental Services
- Mary Delphia, Property Manager, Spring Meadow, Scarafoni Associates
- Lindsay Errichetto, Planner, Berkshire Regional Planning
- Peter Fohlin, Town Manager, Town of

Williamstown

- Andrew Groff, Town Planner, Town of Williamstown
- Betty Anne LaBombard, Director, Williamstown Housing Authority
- Jason McNair, Assistant Assessor, Town of Williamstown
- Elton Ogden, Executive Director, Berkshire Housing (Proprietors Fields)
- Brian O'Grady, Director Area Council on Aging
- Susan Puddester, Case Management Supervisor, Higher Ground, Inc.
- Tom Sheldon, Selectman, Town of Williamstown
- Susan Sprung, Reg. Dir. of Residential Services, MA Dept. of Mental Health
- Cathy Yamamoto, Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

3. Important Note Regarding the Tables that Follow

The Tables that follow include data compiled from the 2000 US Census (both 100% count information from SF-1 and Sample Data from SF-3); from the 100% count information collected by the 2010 US Census; and from the 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) also administered by the US Census Bureau. Each Table provides the Sources of the information.

Those Tables which use data from the 2011 American Community Survey should be evaluated with some real care as the sample size of the ACS is smaller and has a much larger range of variability than the equivalent data from the 2000 Census. Moreover, the ACS is a rolling 5-year average, so that the 2011 data reported represents an average for the period covering 2007-2011. The ACS rather than the decennial census now samples populations on most of the detailed housing questions that were part of the decennial census until 2000. In order to give some sense of housing trends, the consultant chose in numerous instances to place 2000 Census together with 2011 ACS data.

In one crucial area -- information about Renter Households in Williamstown -- the data provided by the 2011 ACS was so significantly at odds with the 100% count information from the 2010 US Census, as to be unbelievable. This presented a significant challenge, as Renter Household data provides the only detailed basis for understanding the nature of housing need. The 2010 100% count data reported 648 renter households in

Williamstown. That number was down from the 740 renter households reported in the 2000 100% count Census. In and of itself, this kind of decline raises questions about the validity of even the 100% sample. But the 2011 ACS data suggested an even smaller number of Renter Households at 565. The consultant found this number to be outside the range of believable based on his 25 plus years of working with this kind of data. After confirming these concerns were shared by the Williamstown Planning Office, the consultant decided to adjust all of the 2011 ACS data and the corresponding CHAS data set data presented here regarding Renter Households so that the total number of Renter Households equaled the 648 provided by the 2010 100% Census. To do this, the consultant equally adjusted all of the components of renter households used by the 2011 ACS so that they totaled 648 households. Every variable so adjusted is marked with an * in the following tables.

Lastly, two items of clarification for the reader: 1) all Census and American Community Survey data for Williamstown includes Williamstown College students living in the community whether on-campus or off-campus. They are not, however, counted among households unless they live off campus; and 2) all of the Census or ACS data information comes from a time period before Tropical Storm Irene.

4. Report Information

- Study Period: December 1, 2012- March 31, 2013
- Name and Telephone Number of Analyst: John Ryan @ (413) 549-4848

5. Key Limitations

John Ryan certifies that the recommendations and conclusions of this study are based solely on his professional opinion and best efforts. The study has a number of key limitations to consider when reviewing the findings and recommendations provided:

- The study assumes that relatively stable conditions will persist over the period under consideration. Specifically, it assumes that neither Massachusetts nor the United States will suffer a major decline or depression.
- The study bases all dollar amounts on the 2013 value of the dollar unless otherwise noted. In order

not to overstate the available levels of opportunity, the projections are not adjusted to reflect the effects of future inflation.

- The information, estimates, and opinions contained in this report were derived from sources considered reliable. The consultant assumes the possibility of inaccuracy of individual items and for that reason relied upon no single piece of information to the exclusion of other data, and analyzed all information within a framework of common knowledge and experienced judgment.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

II. EXISTING CONDITIONS & TRENDS

The following section looks at the demographic, economic and housing conditions and trends present in Williamstown based on the most current information available.

1. Population

Williamstown is home to 7,754 residents. The Town's population has been declining since the mid-1990s. From 2000-2010, Williamstown lost 670 residents or 8.0% of its population base. During the same period, Berkshire County's population declined by 2.8%, while the Commonwealth as a whole grew by 3.1%. Since 1980, Williamstown's population has declined by 11.3%, compared to a 9.6% decline for Berkshire County, and an increase in the state's population of 14.1%.

Not all of Williamstown's age cohorts have changed equally over the past three decades. Children under the age of 18 have declined by 37% since 1980; the 18-35 year old population dropped by 19.5%; persons 35-64 decreased by 4%. Only seniors gained population: those 65-74 increased by 5% since 1980 while those older than 75 & over grew by 60%. Perhaps most significantly, there are now fewer 35-64 year olds living in Williamstown than there were in 1980. Statewide, the population of that key working age cohort has increased by 50%.

Table II.1

POPULATION

Williamstown, Berkshire County & Massachusetts, 2000-2010

Number					Percent Change 1990-2010		
	Williamstown				Williamstown	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
	1980	1990	2000	2010			
Total Population	8,741	8,220	8,424	7,754	-11.3%	-9.6%	14.1%
0-17	1,650	1,333	1,293	1,040	-37.0%	-32.0%	-5.5%
18-34	3,350	2,955	2,881	2,667	-20.4%	-35.7%	-10.8%
35-64	2,515	2,464	2,603	2,418	-3.9%	18.4%	50.1%
65-74	662	733	643	697	5.3%	-2.7%	8.0%
75 & Over	564	735	1,004	902	59.9%	41.1%	46.8%

SOURCE: US Census 1980-2010

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

2. Economic Conditions

Williamstown is home to 3,848 jobs or slightly more jobs than work-age residents in the labor force. Just over 62% of Williamstown's employed residents work in the community. Williamstown residents are more than twice as likely to also work in town than is the case for the average community statewide. The combined payroll of Williamstown's local jobs is \$168 million, making it the 4th largest employer in Berkshire County, behind Pittsfield, North Adams and just behind Great Barrington.

From 2000-2011, local jobs declined by 336 or -8.0%. Declines occurred in all sectors: Goods Producing, Service and Government jobs. It is not just a coincidence that population and local jobs declined equally; as jobs have left the community, residents have followed. Williamstown's rate of job loss was significantly higher than the county (-3.4%) or the state (+0.3%). Over the same period, the town's residential unemployment rate (a calculation based on where workers live regardless of where they work) actually declined from 6.3% to 4.9%.

The average-wage worker employed in Williamstown earned \$840/week in 2011, or 34% more than they did in 2000. This compares to a 22% average wage increase for all Berkshire County workers over the same period. Williamstown's average wage is about \$64/ week higher than the average for the county, but it is \$307/ week lower than the average for all workers in Massachusetts.

Williamstown's major employer, Williams College, accounts for roughly 30% of all local jobs. The college's workforce is down slightly from five years ago; the college anticipates no major change in staffing in the foreseeable future. The other major employers – The Town and School Department, Sweet Brook Care Center, Williamstown Commons Nursing Home, and Williams Inn– have also shown stable or slightly declining employment over the past five years. None see significant changes ahead. Once among the town's largest employers, Steiner Films recently closed one of its two remaining plants in town, shedding 24 jobs in the process.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.2

KEY ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Williamstown, Berkshire County & Massachusetts, 2002-2012

	Williamstown		Berkshire County		Massachusetts	
	2000	2011	2000	2011	2000	2011
<i>Residential Employment</i>						
Enrolled in Labor Force	3,990	3,752	68,792	71,252	3,425,500	3,459,300
Employed	3,738	3,569	65,253	66,902	3,233,800	3,247,300
Unemployment Rate	6.3%	4.9%	5.1%	6.1%	5.6%	6.1%
<i>Local Jobs</i>						
Private Goods Producing	316	235	11,059	7,337	496,092	372,811
Private Service Producing	3,459	3,248	43,812	44,945	2,294,128	2,780,273
Government Jobs	409	365	7,640	8,082	412,103	411,331
Total, All Jobs	4,184	3,848	62,511	60,364	3,202,323	3,191,604
<i>Average Weekly Wage</i>						
Goods Producing Jobs	\$600	\$706	\$1,054	\$1,132	\$1,034	\$1,394
Service Producing Jobs	\$631	\$848	\$574	\$712	\$833	\$1,114
Total, All Jobs	\$628	\$840	\$629	\$776	\$865	\$1,147
<i>Commuting to Work</i>						
Work in Town of Residence	66.4%	62.4%	44.9%	46.2%	31.3%	31.5%
Work in County of Residence	93.1%	89.5%	92.7%	92.5%	68.9%	65.5%
Work in State of Residence	93.8%	90.5%	92.7%	95.2%	96.7%	96.1%

SOURCE: MA Division of Labor and Workforce Development, 2000 US Census, SF3, Table P26, P29; 2011 ACS Tables B8007, B8008

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

3. Housing Characteristics

Williamstown has roughly 3,000 occupied housing units. Eighty percent of these units are owner-occupied, compared to 69% for the county and 64% for the Commonwealth as a whole. The number of renter-occupied units in town dropped by 92 to 648 units between 2000-2010, a decline of more than 12%. Over the same time period, the community's rental vacancy rate nearly doubled to more than 11%. In addition to vacancies, one likely reason for the decline in rental occupancy is the conversion of previously rented single-family and condominiums to owner-occupancy or seasonal use. Local interviews and current classifieds suggest that the high vacancy rate reported in April 2010 has diminished substantially during the past nearly three years and is once again in the 5% range.

About a quarter of all renters in Williamstown live in single-family homes, as do 84% of owners. With the exception of the town's subsidized housing developments, few renters live in buildings larger than four units.

In 2010, 10.7% of Williamstown's owner-occupied units were mobile homes. After the flooding of the Spruces

Mobile Home Park in August 2011 that number dropped under 4.0%. Relatively few occupants of the Spruces Mobile Home Park were renters. *Note: None of the Census information captures the changes resulted from the flooding in 2011.*

About 41% of rental units in town and 31% of owner units were built prior to 1940. While Williamstown's housing stock is actually newer than that of the county or state, only 18 rental units were created since 2000, by far the lowest number created in any decade since 1940.

The distribution of housing in Williamstown by bedroom size is pretty consistent with county and state levels: 72% of rental units have one- or two- bedrooms, while 74% of owner-occupied units have three- or four- bedrooms.

According to the current Master List of properties in Williamstown, the Town Appraiser has designated 66 single-family homes (3.2%) and 12 multi-family properties as being in Poor, Poor-Fair, or Unsatisfactory condition.

Table II.3

HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Williamstown, Berkshire County & Massachusetts, 2000-2010

Number				Percent		
Williamstown				Williamstown	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
2000	2010	% Change		2010	2010	2010
<i>Tenure</i>						
Owner Occupied	2,013	2,288	13.7%	80.0%	69.0%	63.6%
Renter Occupied	740	648	-12.4%	20.0%	31.0%	33.4%
<i>Vacancy</i>						
Vacant for Sale	44	90	104.5%	3.8%	1.8%	1.4%
Vacant for Rent	42	83	97.6%	11.4%	7.3%	5.4%
Seasonal Use	199	231	16.1%	6.9%	11.8%	4.1%
<i>Units in Structure</i>						
<i>Single Family</i>						
Owner Occupied	1,687	1,919	13.8%	83.9%	88.2%	82.8%
Renter Occupied*	204	159	-22.1%	24.5%	18.1%	14.5%
<i>2-4 Units</i>						
Owner Occupied	59	87	47.5%	3.8%	6.5%	10.3%
Renter Occupied*	350	297	-15.1%	45.8%	41.4%	39.1%
<i>5-9 Units</i>						
Owner Occupied	18	11	-38.9%	0.5%	0.6%	1.6%
Renter Occupied*	63	66	4.8%	10.2%	11.7%	13.5%
<i>10+ Units</i>						
Owner Occupied	30	26	-13.3%	1.1%	1.1%	4.2%
Renter Occupied*	114	111	-2.6%	17.1%	21.6%	31.5%
<i>Mobile Home</i>						
Owner Occupied	219	245	11.90%	10.70%	3.60%	1.10%
Renter Occupied*	9	15	66.70%	2.30%	0.90%	3.20%

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Number				Percent		
Williamstown				Williamstown	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
2000	2010	% Change		2010	2010	2010
<i>Age of Structure</i>						
<i>Built Prior to 1940</i>						
Owner Occupied	591	713	20.6%	31.20%	35.0%	29.9%
Renter Occupied*	393	301	-23.4%	41.2%	47.8%	43.5%
<i>Built within Last Ten Years</i>						
Owner Occupied	128	98	-23.4%	4.3%	4.7%	7.0%
Renter Occupied*	31	18	-41.9%	3.2%	2.5%	6.0%
<i>Bedrooms in Unit</i>						
<i>Studio/ One Bedroom</i>						
Owner Occupied	143	116	-18.9%	5.1%	4.0%	4.0%
Renter Occupied*	268	233	-13.1%	36.0%	38.8%	37.0%
<i>Two Bedrooms</i>						
Owner Occupied	424	490	15.6%	21.4%	21.7%	21.6%
Renter Occupied*	236	234	-0.8%	36.1%	32.4%	37.7%
<i>Three Bedrooms</i>						
Owner Occupied	793	979	23.5%	42.8%	49.0%	44.8%
Renter Occupied*	154	132	-14.3%	20.4%	22.3%	19.5%
<i>Four or More Bedrooms</i>						
Owner Occupied	653	703	7.7%	30.7%	25.3%	29.6%
Renter Occupied*	72	50	-30.6%	7.7%	6.4%	4.7%
<i>Poor Condition Housing, FY 13</i>						
Single Family	N/A	66	N/A	3.2%	N/A	N/A
Multi-Family	N/A	12	N/A	6.5%	N/A	N/A

SOURCE: 2000 Census SF-3 Tables H7, H8, H32, H36, H42; 2010 Census QT-H1, QT-H2; 2011 ACS, DP04, B25004, B25032, B2503; and Williamstown Appraiser Report.

4. Renter Characteristics

According to the 2010 Census, Williamstown is home to 648 renter households: 138 (21%) of these households are subsidized for low-income residents, leaving 510 market-rate units. Another roughly 69 (11%) market-rate tenants use Section 8 vouchers to subsidize the cost of their rent.

Though overall renter occupancy dropped by 12% from 2000-2010, the number of renters living alone actually increased. Renter households of four or more persons registered the largest decline (-34%).

In terms of age, Williamstown saw significant declines in renter householders under 35 years old (-26%) and 35-64 years old (-16%). At the same time, the number of renter households 65 and over grew by 14%. Currently, 30% of all renter households in town are seniors. This compares to less than 18 percent statewide.

The 2011 American Community Survey (ACS) data suggests that the number of renter households with children declined by nearly 50% since 2000. A remarkably low percentage of Williamstown's children live in rental housing (10%).

The median gross rent in Williamstown in 2010 was \$868/month. That represents a 62% increase from 2000, or twice the rate of average wage increases. Williamstown's median rent in 2010 was 15.7% higher than the county

median but 19.4% lower than the median for Massachusetts as a whole. It is important to note that the town's average wage is 30% lower than the state but median rents are just 20% lower.

In 2010, the median household income for all renter households in Williamstown was \$31,808 or just 5.6% higher than it was ten years earlier. The Town's median income renter household earns \$458/ month more than the median renter in Berkshire County, but again, earns about \$350/ month less than the median renter statewide. Here too it is important to note that during a period when median rent increased by 62%, median renter income grew by only 5.6%.

Two-thirds of the community's elderly renters and slightly more than 25% of its non-elderly renters are considered Very Low Income, that is they earn less than 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for a household of their size. The community's high concentration of subsidized elderly housing helps account for the disproportionately high share of very low-income senior renters. The community's concentration of Very Low Income non-elderly renters is significantly lower than it is countywide (43%) and statewide (38%). In part, this can be explained by the limited number of subsidized family units (38), and in part by the availability of affordable rental housing in nearby communities.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

AREA MEDIAN INCOME

HUD Limits By Household Size

Berkshire County, 2013

Income Limits	1 Person	2 Persons	3 Persons	4 Persons	5 Persons	6 Persons
30% of AMI	\$17,200	\$19,650	\$22,100	\$24,550	\$26,550	\$28,500
50% of AMI	\$28,700	\$32,800	\$36,900	\$40,950	\$44,250	\$47,550
60% of AMI	\$34,400	\$39,300	\$44,200	\$49,100	\$53,100	\$57,000
80% of AMI	\$45,100	\$51,550	\$58,000	\$64,400	\$69,600	\$74,750
100% of AMI	\$57,400	\$78,600	\$88,400	\$98,200	\$106,200	\$114,000

SOURCE: Huduser.org Income Limits dataset

Despite the overall loss of rental occupancy, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Williamstown renter households that pay at least 35% of their income for rent. Traditionally, 35% of income represents the threshold of being “rent-burdened.” In 2000, fewer than one-in-five

renters were so burdened by the cost of their housing; by 2010, that percentage had doubled. Currently, 38.2% of all Williamstown renter-households pay at least 35% of their gross income for rent and 21% pay at least half of their income for rent.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.4

RENTER CHARACTERISTICS

Williamstown, Berkshire County & Massachusetts, 2000-2010

Housing Units				Percent		
	Williamstown			Williamstown	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
	2000	2010	% Change	2010	2010	2010
<i>By Household Size</i>						
One*	359	365	1.7%	56.3%	51.4%	42.0%
Two*	221	156	-29.4%	24.1%	26.0%	28.0%
Three*	79	74	-6.6%	11.4%	12.7%	14.8%
Four or More	81	53	-34.2%	8.2%	9.8%	16.1%
<i>By Age of Householder</i>						
Under 35*	257	191	-25.8%	29.4%	28.5%	34.4%
35-64*	313	263	-15.9%	40.6%	47.4%	48.0%
65 and Over*	170	194	14.2%	29.9%	24.1%	17.6%
<i>By Presence of Children Under 18</i>						
Children Present*	176	89	-49.4%	13.7%	24.4%	25.6%
No Children Present*	564	559	-0.9%	86.3%	75.6%	74.4%
<i>By Gross Rent Paid</i>						
\$0-\$499/ month*	261	86	-67.0%	13.3%	23.7%	17.3%
\$500-\$749/ month*	227	151	-33.5%	23.3%	26.7%	12.0%
\$750-\$999/ month*	96	208	116.7%	32.1%	30.5%	18.6%
\$1,000 or more/ month*	57	203	256.1%	31.3%	19.1%	52.1%
Median Gross Rent	535	\$868	62.2%	\$868	\$750	\$1,037

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Housing Units				Percent		
Williamstown				Williamstown	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
2000	2010	% Change		2010	2010	2010
<i>By Renter Household Income</i>						
\$0-\$19,999*	270	175	-35.2%	27.0%	40.1%	31.6%
\$20,000-\$34,999*	256	174	-32.0%	26.8%	23.0%	17.9%
\$35,000-\$49,999*	102	79	-22.5%	12.1%	13.9%	14.1%
\$50,000 or more*	231	220	-4.8%	34.0%	23.0%	36.4%
Median Renter Household Income	\$29,808	\$31,410	5.4%	\$31,410	\$25,908	\$35,624
<i>By Household Income as a % of Area Median Income (2000 & 2005-9)</i>						
Less than 30% of AMI*	168	143	-14.9%	22.1%	34.1%	31.8%
30-49% of AMI*	112	186	66.1%	28.7%	22.2%	16.6%
50-79% of AMI*	104	126	21.2%	19.4%	20.3%	16.1%
80% of AMI or More*	339	195	-42.5%	30.1%	18.3%	35.5%
<i>Rent Burden (% of gross income paid for rent)</i>						
Paying 35-49% of Gross Income *	141	118	80.1%	18.2%	12.8%	13.8%
Paying 50% of More of Gross Income*		136		21.0%	24.2%	24.4%

SOURCE: 2000 Census SF-3 Tables H14, H17, HCT1, HCT11, HCT12, H62, H63, H73; 2011 ACS, Tables B25007 B25009 B25012, B25063, B25064, B25070, B25115, B25118, B25119; CHAS Data Series 2000 & 2005-2009 Table 7

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

5. Owner Characteristics

As with renter households, the number of owners living alone increased significantly from 2000 to 2010. Nearly a third of all owned homes are lived in by a single person. This compares to a 21.6% rate of single person ownership for the state as a whole.

The number of younger homeowners declined dramatically in the last decade as well. Only 2.9% of homeowners in Williamstown are under 35 years old. By comparison 6.9% of the county's owners and 8.9% of the owners in the state are under 35 years old.

Roughly one owner-occupied household in four has someone younger than 18 years old present at home. The number of owner households with children present has grown by 99 since 2000. Rental households with children declined by a similar number. Williamstown owners are more likely than their county counterparts to have children living at home but less likely than owners statewide.

The median income of Williamstown's owner-occupied households is \$79,500 compared to \$31,808 for the median

renter income. The median owner income increased by 36% from 2000 to 2010 compared to just 5.6% for renter households. About a quarter of all homeowners earn less than \$35,000; statewide only 15.5% of homeowners earn this little.

About one Williamstown homeowner in five would qualify as Very Low Income, earning less than 50% of AMI. The majority of these 485 households are elderly.

Given the increased cost of owning a home from 2000-2010, the number of homeowners who pay at least 35% of their gross income for housing costs increased from 210 to 458, a 118% jump. Roughly half of these cost burdened owners are elderly. Despite that increase, Williamstown's rate of cost-burdened homeowners (20.1%) is actually significantly lower than for the county (24.6%) or the state (27.0%).

There is no deed-restricted affordable homeownership located in Williamstown.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.5

OWNER CHARACTERISTICS

Williamstown, Berkshire County & Massachusetts, 2000-2010

Housing Units				Percent		
Williamstown				Williamstown	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
	2000	2010	% Change	2010	2010	2010
<i>By Household Size</i>						
One	546	730	33.7%	31.9%	28.3%	21.6%
Two	827	757	-8.5%	33.1%	37.9%	34.7%
Three	283	343	21.2%	15.0%	15.6%	17.0%
Four or More	356	458	28.7%	20.0%	18.2%	26.9%
<i>By Age of Householder</i>						
Under 35	96	66	-31.3%	2.9%	6.9%	8.9%
35-64	1,097	1,347	22.8%	58.9%	52.1%	66.4%
65 and Over	820	875	6.7%	38.2%	31.0%	24.6%
<i>By Presence of Children Under 18</i>						
Children Present	527	626	18.8%	27.4%	24.4%	31.3%
No Children Present	1,486	1,662	11.8%	72.6%	75.6%	68.7%
<i>By Owner Household Income</i>						
\$0-\$19,999	371	307	-17.3%	13.5%	11.3%	7.0%
\$20,000-\$34,999	256	242	-5.5%	10.6%	14.1%	8.5%
\$35,000-\$49,999	202	169	-16.3%	7.4%	13.8%	9.5%
\$50,000- \$99,999	704	677	-3.8%	29.7%	36.5%	32.5%
\$100,000 or more	480	886	84.6%	38.8%	24.2%	42.5%
Median Owner Household Income	\$58,272	\$79,500	36.4%	\$79,500	\$61,864	\$87,425

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

	Housing Units			Percent		
	2000	2010	% Change	Williamstown 2010	Berkshire County 2010	Massachusetts 2010
<i>By Household Income as a % of Area Median Income</i>						
Less than 30% of AMI	157	255	62.4%	11.0%	8.2%	6.7%
30-49% of AMI	192	230	19.8%	10.0%	10.6%	8.2%
50-79% of AMI	227	300	32.2%	9.8%	18.4%	12.4%
80 of AMI or More	1,413	1,500	6.2%	61.2%	62.8%	72.8%
<i>Cost Burden (% of income paid for selected owner costs)</i>						
Paying 35% or More of Gross Income	210	458	118.1%	20.1%	24.6%	27.0%

SOURCE: 2000 Census SF-3 Tables H14, H17, H97, HCT1, HCT11, HCT12; 2011 ACS, Tables DP04, B25007, B25009, B25012, B25115, B25118, B25119, B25092; CHAS Data Series 2000 & 2005-2009 Table 7

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

6. Senior Characteristics

By 2010, the large baby-boomer population was at the doorstep of senior citizenship in Williamstown as it was throughout the United States. While the population 65 years and over actually declined by 100 persons between 2000 and 2010, the number of residents 55-64 years old grew by 269 over the decade. One Williamstown resident in three is at least 55 years old. That number is consistent with county totals but is significantly higher than for Massachusetts.

The Census recorded a 10% increase in both younger seniors (65-74) and very old seniors (85+) from 2000-2010, but also recorded a 25% drop in Williamstown's 75-84 year old population. This is the population most commonly living in independent elderly housing.

As the population grows older it also grows more female. For Williamstown seniors between age 65 and 74, 54.5% are female. That percentage grows to 63.7% among those 75 and over. Williamstown seniors have only a slightly higher concentration of females than do the county or state.

Nearly half of all seniors in Williamstown live alone, consistent with county and statewide levels. The number of seniors living in an institutionalized setting (i.e. nursing home) declined by 60 from 2000 to 2010, but still

represents 20% of all senior residents. The presence of two nursing homes in town increases the concentration of institutionalized seniors fourfold over the county or state.

According to the ACS Data, the median income of Williamstown householders 65 years and over was \$53,030 in 2010. This median is more than 70% higher than it was in 2000 and is dramatically higher than for the median for the county (\$33,787) or the State (\$36,282). Notwithstanding the relative wealth of Williamstown seniors, nearly 40% earn less than \$35,000.

Roughly 30% of all senior households in Williamstown (and two-thirds of senior renters) would qualify as Very-Low Income, earning less than 50% of AMI. The concentration of Very-Low Income seniors is significantly lower in the community than in the rest of the county or state. There has been a nearly 50% increase in the number of senior households earning between 50-80% of AMI. These represent about 255 households earning roughly \$30,000- \$50,000. Most are current homeowners.

In all, 286 senior households in Williamstown are paying more than 35% of their gross income for housing: this includes 216 senior owners (nearly triple the number in 2000) and 70 renter households.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.6

SENIOR CHARACTERISTICS

Williamstown, Berkshire County & Massachusetts, 2000-2010

	Number			Percent		
	Williamstown			Williamstown	Berkshire County	Massachusetts
	2000	2010	% Change	2010	2010	2010
<i>Age Distribution (Persons)</i>						
55-64	727	996	37.0%	12.8%	14.8%	12.3%
65-74	634	697	9.9%	9.0%	9.1%	6.9%
75-84	677	510	-24.7%	6.6%	6.3%	4.6%
85 and over	358	392	9.5%	5.1%	3.2%	2.2%
Total	2396	2595	8.3%	33.5%	33.4%	26.0%
<i>Sex by Age, Persons 65 & Over</i>						
<i>Persons 65-74:</i>						
Female	364	380	4.4%	54.5%	53.2%	54.2%
Male	279	317	13.6%	45.5%	46.8%	45.8%
<i>75 & Over:</i>						
Female	679	575	-15.3%	63.7%	61.7%	62.6%
Male	325	327	0.1%	36.3%	38.3%	37.4%
<i>Households By Presence of Person 65 and over</i>						
Living in Family Households	557	489	-12.2%	52.1%	51.5%	49.7%
Living in Non-Family Households	458	450	-1.7%	47.9%	49.5%	50.3%
Institutionalized Persons	327	267	-18.3%	20.5%	5.0%	4.3%
<i>By Household Size (Householder 65 and Over)</i>						
One	458	437	-4.6%	48.2%	49.9%	48.3%
Two or More	526	469	-10.8%	51.8%	50.1%	51.7%
Total	984	906	-7.9%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Number				Percent		
Williamstown				Williamstown 2010	Berkshire County 2010	Massachusetts 2010
By Household Income (Householder 65 and Over)						
\$0-\$19,999	365	254	-30.4%	24.3%	29.2%	28.4%
\$20,000-\$34,999	178	169	-5.1%	16.2%	22.4%	20.3%
\$35,000-\$49,999	101	93	-7.9%	8.9%	15.5%	13.8%
\$50,000- \$99,999	181	286	58.0%	27.3%	23.6%	23.3%
\$100,000 or more	132	244	84.8%	23.3%	9.3%	14.2%
Median Household Income 65-74	\$34,181	\$53,030	n/a	\$53,030	\$33,787	\$36,282
Median Household Income 75+	\$26,875					
Household Income as a % of Area Median Income (Householder 65 and Over)						
Less than 30% of AMI*	153	175	14.4%	15.7%	20.1%	26.1%
30-49% of AMI*	176	175	-0.6%	15.7%	18.9%	18.9%
50-79% of AMI*	173	255	47.4%	22.9%	21.2%	16.6%
80 of AMI or more*	510	520	2.0%	46.6%	39.8%	38.4%
Household Cost Burden (Householder 65 and Over)						
Paying 35% or More of Income for:						
Selected Owner Costs	74	216	191.9%	24.7%	28.2%	29.9%
Gross Rent	46	70	52.2%	40.9%	33.9%	40.3%

SOURCE: 2000 Census SF-3 Tables P8, P11, P55, P56, H71, H96, HCT2; 2011 ACS, Tables DP-1, QT P-1, QT P-13, B19037, B25072, B25093; CHAS Data Series 2000 & 2005-2009

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

7. Special Needs Characteristics

The Census Bureau discontinued its collection of disability data at the community or county level after the 2000 Census. Looking at that older data, Williamstown represents an unusual case. With the presence of two nursing home and assisted care facilities, the town has a relatively high percentage of seniors (38.5%) who report having a disability. At the same time, with its large student population, the number of residents age 16-64 years old with disabilities is little more than half that of the county

and state. In 2000, the community was home to 46 work age residents and another 135 senior residents with some form of self-care disability.

Conversations with officials from the MA Department of Mental Health and Developmental Services suggest that the existing group homes in the community adequately serve the community's needs.

Table II.7

SPECIAL NEEDS CHARACTERISTICS

Williamstown, Berkshire County & Massachusetts, 2000

Number		Percent		
	Williamstown 2000	Williamstown 2000	Berkshire County 2000	Massachusetts 2000
<i>With a Disability (Persons)</i>				
5-15 Years Old	75	8.3%	7.0%	6.2%
16-64 Years Old	276	10.1%	19.2%	17.5%
65 & Over	511	38.4%	30.9%	37.8%
Total	862	17.3%	20.3%	18.4%

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Number		Percent		
Williamstown		Williamstown 2010	Berkshire County 2010	Massachusetts 2010
<i>By Type of Disability (Persons)</i>				
Persons 5-15 Years Old				
Physical Disability	0	0.0%	1.0%	0.9%
Mental Disability	75	8.3%	6.2%	5.2%
Self-Care Disability	0	0.0%	0.9%	0.9%
Persons 16-64 Years Old				
Physical Disability	156	5.7%	1.8%	5.0%
Mental Disability	149	5.4%	4.2%	3.7%
Self-Care Disability	46	1.7%	1.5%	1.5%
Persons 65 Years & Over				
Physical Disability	395	16.5%	19.9%	24.8%
Mental Disability	108	4.5%	6.6%	8.8%
Self-Care Disability	135	5.6%	6.1%	8.6%

SOURCE: 2000 US Census SF-3, Tables P-41, P42. **NOTE:** No comparable data exists for 2010.

8. Subsidized Housing

Williamstown is home to five rental housing developments and two special needs group homes whose units count on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory. The rental developments include Proprietor's Fields, Meadowvale, Spring Meadow, Church Corner, and Stetson Road. These 128 total independent rental units include 90 independent apartments for seniors or disabled residents, 38 rental units that are not age-restricted.

Proprietor's Fields is a 60-unit HUD 202 project constructed in 1979 and managed by Berkshire Housing of Pittsfield. Residents must be at least 62 years old or have a mobility impairment that requires handicapped accessible housing. Resident incomes may not exceed 80% of AMI (\$45,500 for one person; \$52,000 for two persons). Income includes social security, SSI, pensions, wages, alimony,

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

interest, dividends, and 2% of all non-income producing assets or assets disposed of for less than fair market value. There is no asset limitation. By contract, at least 40% of all units must be rented to residents earning no more than 30% of AMI. Currently 62% of residents earn less than 30% of AMI and 90% earn less than 50% of AMI. All tenants pay 30% of their income for rent. The project consists of 57 one- and three two-bedroom units. The town senior center is located adjacent to the property and offers many activities including hot lunches, exercise, dance and cooking classes, health clinics, bingo, bridge, entertainment and social functions. Transportation is also provided for medical and social appointments, grocery shopping and banking and visiting to local nursing homes. There are currently no vacant units. They have a waiting list of 44 households of whom 23 currently live in town and 13 in surrounding communities. Berkshire Housing projects a 3 to 5 years wait for a second floor unit with any 1st floor unit being absorbed by existing residents transferring to a ground floor apartment. Turnover varies dramatically for year-to-year but has averaged about 6.6 units of turnover annually over the past five years. According to records maintained by the MA Department of Housing & Community Development, the affordability restrictions on this project expire in 2020.

Meadowvale is a 30-unit public housing complex managed by the Williamstown Housing Authority. Eligibility requirements are the same for Meadowvale as they are for Proprietor's Fields. In January 2011, 70% of

tenants had incomes less than 30% of AMI. Nineteen of the 30 tenants had lived there at least five years. On average, the development provides housing to two or three new tenants per year. The apartments are all one-bedroom units. As with Proprietor's Fields, tenants pay 30% of their adjusted gross income for rent. More than half of current tenants pay less than \$300/month for rent. Meadowvale has consistently enjoyed full or nearly full occupancy. They maintain a waiting list of 28 eligible applicants, 22 of whom live in Williamstown currently. According to the WHA Director, 14 residents displaced by Tropical Storm Irene applied for housing at Meadowvale after the flood and were given a priority status. Four have moved in since August 2011. Since then the WHA has been able to offer housing to all 14 of the Spruces applicants; 11 have declined the opportunity to move there.

In addition to operating Meadowvale, the Housing Authority has, since 1983, managed eight units of family rental on Stetson Road and Cole Avenue. This MA Section 705 Public housing development limits eligibility to tenants earning less than 80% of AMI. All but one current resident earns less than 30% of AMI. Rent is based on 30% of the tenants adjusted gross income. The median rent collected is about \$350/month. There were two vacant two-bedroom units on March 5, 2013. The WHA Director has worked through the existing waiting list and anticipates that the last two waiting list applicants will in fact occupy these vacant units. The eight units are home to 15 children under the age of 18. Turnover averages about one unit/year.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Spring Meadow is a 22-unit Rural Development Section 515-funded project. Developed in 1990 and managed by Scarafoni Realty in North Adams, Spring Meadow includes one-, two- and three-bedroom independent rental units. Eligible tenants may be of any age but may earn no more than 80% of AMI. Only one of the 22 current tenants is old enough to qualify for senior housing. According to the property manager, more than half of the current residents would qualify as Very Low Income. Market rents are set at \$575/ month for one-bedroom, \$615/ month for two-bedroom, and \$650/ month for three bedroom units, but tenants pay based on their income and only a small fraction pay the full base rent. In addition, tenants pay for all utilities. Located in an attractive suburban location north of downtown, Spring Meadow has maintained generally full-occupancy. There was one unit vacant in early March 2013. Spring Meadow does not have an active waiting list but fills units as needed. On average, no more than two units turnover each year. According to the owner, Spring Meadow has the potential to add four units of additional affordable rentals.

Scarafoni Realty also manages Church Corner on Cole Avenue. This 8-unit adaptive reuse of an historic church property began occupancy in 2009 with the assistance of Community Preservation Act funding. According to the developer, only one unit has turned over to date. These units are restricted to residents earning less than 80% of

AMI. Rents are closer to market rate with one-bedroom units at \$775, two-bedrooms at \$875 and \$975, and three-bedroom units at \$1,175. Heat is included in the rent. Section 8 vouchers are not permitted in this project. The project is fully occupied but as with Spring Meadow there is no active waiting list.

The MA Departments of Mental Health (DMH) and Development Services (DDS) each operate group homes for special needs residents in Williamstown. The location and profile of all DMH and DDS housing is confidential. The agencies' regional administrators indicated that supply and need for housing to serve Williamstown residents was in balance, though the need for special needs housing options in Northern Berkshire County exceeded supply generally.

In addition to these projects, the Williamstown Housing Authority administers the Section 8 voucher program. They manage the process for 74 renter households who utilize Section 8 vouchers in private apartments (and some subsidized housing developments) in Williamstown. Local residents are given priority for receiving these vouchers. According to the WHA's Director, all local applicants have been housed in recent months. The WHA maintains a waiting list of 87 eligible applicants waiting for an available voucher that may be used anywhere in Massachusetts. All of these waiting list households reside outside of Williamstown.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.8

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

Williamstown, 2013

Name/ Address of Project	Date Built	Expiring Use Date	Funding Program	Number of units	One Bedroom	Two Bedroom	Three Bedroom	Vacancies	Waiting List	Williamstown Residents
Family Rental Developments										
Spring Meadow (Scarafoni)	1990	2041	RD 515	22	\$575+	\$615+	\$650+	0	0	
Church Corner (Scarafoni)	2009	Perpetual	LIP	8	\$775	\$875- \$975	\$1,150	0	0	
Stetson Road (WHA)	1983	Perpetual	MA 705-1	8	30% of Adj Gross			0	10	7
Elderly Rental Developments										
Meadowvale (WHA)	1985	Perpetual	MA 667	30		n/a	n/a	0	28	22
Proprietor's Fields (WEHC)	1979	2020	HUD 202	60	30% of Adj Gross		n/a	0	44	23
Special Needs Units										
Group Homes	n/a	Perpetual	DMH/DMR	11	n/a			0	n/a	n/a
Section 8 Vouchers										
Williamstown Housing Authority	n/a	n/a	HUD 8		n/a				98	0

SOURCE: MA Subsidized Housing Inventory, Property Managers, Mar-2013

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

9. Current Market Conditions: Rental Housing

Between 2000 and 2013, HUD's Fair Market Rent (FMR) for the non-Pittsfield portion of Berkshire County increased by between 36% and 42% depending on bedroom size. Based on current FMRs, 53% of current Williamstown renter households could afford to rent a one-bedroom apartment in town using no more than 30% of their income. That percentage drops to 40% for those trying to rent a three-bedroom unit at HUD's FMR.

According to Census and ACS Data, the median gross rent in the community increased by 62% from 2000 to

2010. This is twice the increase in average local wages over that time period and ten times the increase in median renter income. Only about 45% of current renters can afford the cost of the median gross rent in the community.

In February 2013, the consultant researched apartments and homes for rent using local print and on-line sources. The median market rate rent (including heat and hot water) was substantially higher than HUD's Fair Market Rent. A concurrent review of rental listings in Adams and North Adams suggests that rents in Williamstown range from \$150/ month to \$500/ month higher than in these two neighboring communities depending on bedroom size.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.9.1

RENTAL COSTS & AFFORDABILITY

Williamstown, 2000-2013

				Income Needed to Afford	% of Renters Who Can Afford
	2000	Current	% Change		
HUD Fair Market Rents					
One Bedroom	\$458	\$648	41.5%	\$25,920	53%
Two Bedroom	\$564	\$768	36.2%	\$30,720	49%
Three Bedroom	\$708	\$973	37.4%	\$38,920	40%
Maximum LIHTC Rents					
One Bedroom	n/a	\$922	n/a	\$36,880	41%
Two Bedroom		\$1,107		\$44,280	37%
Three Bedroom		\$1,278		\$51,120	30%
Median Gross Rent					
Median Gross Rent	\$535	\$868	62.2%	\$34,720	45%
As % of County Median	107.2%	115.7%	7.9%	n/a	n/a
As % of State Median	78.2%	83.7%	7.0%		
Current Listings, Feb 2013					
One Bedroom Range	\$600+ to \$950 inc			\$33,400	47%
Median (including heat & hot water)	\$835				
Two Bedroom Range	\$650+ to \$1,100+			\$37,000	41%
Median (including heat & hot water)	\$925				
Three Bedroom Range	\$900+ to \$1,575 inc			\$54,000	27%
Median (including heat & hot water)	\$1,350				

SOURCE Huduser.org databases; 2000 US Census SF3 Table H-63, 2011 ACS Table B25063; Craigslist, Interviews with property managers, 2/2013; CHAS Databases 2005-2009

NOTE: Affordability based on 30% of Gross Income for Rent and Utilities.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Figure II.9.2

RENTAL LISTINGS

Adams, North Adams, & Williamstown, MA, February 2013

Cost including Heat & Hot Water	Adams	North Adams	Williamstown
One Bedroom Range	\$400+ to \$725 inc	\$395+ to \$780 inc	\$600+ to \$950 inc
Median	\$560	\$650	\$835
Two Bedroom Range	\$550+ to \$780 inc	\$500+ to \$990 inc	\$650+ to \$1,100+
Median	\$675	\$775	\$925
Three Bedroom Range	\$600+ to \$1,200 inc	\$600+ to \$950+	\$900+ to \$1,575 inc
Median	\$975	\$850	\$1,350

SOURCE: Huduser.org databases; 2000 US Census SF3 Table H-63, 2011 ACS Table B25063; Craigslist, Berkshire Eagle, North Adams Transcript and Interviews with property managers, 2/2013.

10. Current Market Conditions: For Sale Housing

Williamstown has averaged about 72 arms-length home sales annually, over the past several years, representing a low turnover rate of less than 2.5% of ownership stock annually. Annual sales have been dropping since 2000 in the community. Williamstown's rate of home sales is on par with neighboring communities of North Adams and Adams.

Williamstown's median single-family home price is more than double that of North Adams and Adams, and more than 55% higher than the median for the county as a whole. From 2000-2007, the median single family home

sold in town more than doubled in value from \$165,000 to \$374,000. From 2007-2012, that median price dropped by 28.5% to \$267,500.

Williamstown's 127% increase in median home value from 2000-2007 was one of the highest in the Commonwealth, more than doubling the statewide increase. The drop in home prices since 2007 has also been higher than neighboring communities, the county or the state. Williamstown's overall increase in median single-family home value since 2000 is 62% compared to 32-42% for these other locations. In other words, while most home

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

values in Massachusetts kept pace with changes in average wages, Williamstown's home values doubled the rate of wage increase.

In the past three years, 187 single-family homes and 28 condominiums sold on the open market in Williamstown. Twenty-two percent of these sales were for less than \$150,000 and 27% were for over \$400,000.

The following compares home price distribution in Town for sales in 2001 and 2002 with sales from 2010-2012. Sales below \$200,000 have dropped from 51% to

37% of sales; sales between \$200,000-\$299,999 has remained more or less constant; and sales above \$300,000 increased from 27% to 41% of sales.

Current listings for homes on the market in February 2013 include 28 single-family homes and 8 condominiums. This represents an extremely low inventory of unsold homes representing less than six months of average sales and less than 1.5% of ownership stock. Affordable options are substantially harder to find. Only one property in five lists for under \$250,000 while nearly half are asking more than \$400,000.

Table II.10.1

SALES TRANSACTIONS

Williamstown & Surrounding Communities

	Williamstown	North Adams	Adams	Pownal
Single Family				
2000	70	79	72	14
2007	61	78	70	37
2012	57	85	66	4
Change 00-07	-12.9%	-1.3%	-2.8%	164.3%
Change 07-12	-6.6%	9.0%	-5.7%	-89.2%
Condominium				
2000	12	1	1	
2007	15	7	1	
2012	7	8	2	
Change 00-07	25.0%	600.0%	0.0%	
Change 07-12	-53.3%	14.3%	100.0%	

SOURCE: The Warren Group, Town Assessors reports online (Adams, Williamstown)

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.10.2

MEDIAN HOME PRICES

Williamstown & Surrounding Communities

2000-2012

	Williamstown	North Adams	Adams	Pownal	Berkshire Co	Massachusetts
Single Family						
2000	\$165,000	\$85,000	\$89,900	\$135,620	\$124,950	\$215,000
2007	\$374,000	\$148,200	\$149,000	\$172,340	\$210,000	\$345,000
2012	\$267,500	\$112,500	\$123,200	\$192,875	\$172,500	\$290,000
Change 00-07	126.7%	74.4%	65.7%	27.1%	68.1%	60.5%
Change 07-12	-28.5%	-24.1%	-17.3%	11.9%	-17.9%	-15.9%
Condominium						
2000	\$116,000	\$66,000	\$69,150		\$126,000	\$151,825
2007	\$141,000	\$200,000	\$289,406		\$270,000	\$280,000
2012	\$160,000	\$147,500	\$160,000		\$208,000	\$277,000
Change 00-07	21.6%	203.0%	318.5%		114.3%	84.4%
Change 07-12	13.5%	-26.3%	-44.7%		-23.0%	-1.1%

SOURCE: The Warren Group

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.10.3

HOME PRICE DISTRIBUTION

Williamstown, 2010-2012 Sales

	Single Family			Condos			% of Total Sales
	2010	2011	2012	2010	2011	2012	
<\$150,000	14	15	8	6	1	4	22.3%
\$150,000- \$199,999	10	6	12	1	0	3	14.9%
\$200,000- \$249,999	5	5	11	1	4	1	12.6%
\$250,000- \$299,999	6	3	8	3	0	0	9.3%
\$300,000- \$399,999	7	8	11	1	3	0	14.0%
\$400,000 and over	26	15	17	0	0	0	27.0%
TOTAL	68	52	67	12	8	8	100.0%

SOURCE: Williamstown Assessors Sales Report

Table II.10.4

CURRENT HOMES FOR SALE

Williamstown, January 2013

	Single Family	Condos	% of Total
<\$150,000	3	2	6.8%
\$150,000- \$199,999	7	2	12.2%
\$200,000- \$249,999	1	0	1.4%
\$250,000- \$299,999	4	6	13.5%
\$300,000- \$399,999	6	8	18.9%
\$400,000 and over	28	7	47.3%
Median	\$476,000	\$354,900	100.0%

SOURCE: MLS Listings (www.realtor.com), 1/27/13

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Table II.10.5

HOME PRICE DISTRIBUTION

Williamstown, MA

Price	Sales 2001- 2002	Sales 2010- 2012	MLS Listings Feb 2013
<\$150,000	31.1%	22.3%	6.8%
\$150,000- \$199,999	20.1%	14.9%	12.2%
\$200,000- \$249,999	11.0%	12.6%	1.4%
\$250,000- \$299,999	11.0%	9.3%	13.5%
\$300,000- \$399,999	4.9%	14.0%	18.9%
\$400,000 and over	22.0%	27.0%	47.3%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

SOURCE: Housing Needs Assessment by Development Cycles, 2003; Town Assessor Report for 2010-2012, MLS Listings (www.reator.com), 1/27/13

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

11. Home Values & Property Condition

The Williamstown Appraiser's grand list categorizes single-family homes by both assessed value and the condition of the property. According to the Assessor, 10% of all single-family homes in Williamstown have a market value of less than \$150,000. Only about 3% of all homes have an Unsatisfactory, Poor, or Poor/ Fair condition, but 20% of the homes valued less than \$150,000 are so

designated. Thirty percent of homes valued at less than \$150,000 are in Fair or Fair/Average condition. The remaining 50% of homes valued under \$150,000 are considered to be in average condition. So, while there is a fair amount of stock in Town assessed at less than \$150,000, that housing is five times more likely than the average home to be in poor condition.

Table II.11

HOUSING CONDITION & HOME VALUE

Williamstown, 2013

Properties/ Assessment Value	Unsat/ Poor/ Poor Fair	Fair/ Fair Ave	Average	Average Good/ Good	Very Good/ Excellent	Total	% of All Properties
Total Residential Properties	66	225	967	678	129	2065	100.0%
<\$150,000	38	62	96	8	0	204	9.9%
% Less than \$150,000	57.6%	27.6%	9.9%	1.2%	0.0%	9.9%	100.0%
Median Value	\$141,550	\$169,200	\$231,400	\$388,100	\$606,300	\$287,800	

SOURCE: Assessors Report, 2/1/13

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

12. The Spruces Mobile Home Park

Before the flooding caused by Tropical Storm Irene in August 2011, 225 households lived in the Spruces Mobile Home Park. Based on Census data collected before the event, an estimated 93% of the homes were owner-occupied, 85% of all households lived alone, and 70% were elderly. Based on the self-reported information provided by FEMA on March 6, 2012, Higher Ground estimates that, of 198 households reporting, 69.2% of those households had a least one family member who was age 62 or older, and 93% of those same households were below 80% of AMI.

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, affected residents faced the acute problem of finding housing. According to the Case Management Supervisor for Higher Ground (an organization formed to help the victims of the storm) only about 67 of the existing households were able to reoccupy homes in the park on a year-round basis after the flood. Another 18 of the permanently displaced households reported finding housing in Williamstown. According to Higher Ground in March 2013, 66 of the displaced households have addresses in North Adams, 9 in Pownal, 8 in Adams, roughly 60 live elsewhere in Massachusetts, and about 10 live outside of Massachusetts or Vermont.

At the time of the flood, the Williamstown Housing Authority gave priority to seniors displaced by the flooding. Fourteen of the 158 displaced households applied for housing at Meadowvale. All 14 applicants have since been offered housing; four have relocated there. As a federally funded project, Proprietor's Fields was not able to offer any priority to displaced Spruces residents. According to Berkshire Housing and North Adams Housing Authority, 10-12 Spruces residents relocated to available subsidized rental housing in North Adams.

The Town of Williamstown maintains a list of current and former Spruces residents who would be interested in living in the community if appropriate housing were available. As of early April, 2013, 33 households had added their names to that list.

In March 2013, FEMA finalized its commitment to pay \$6.13 million to close the mobile home park permanently, compensate those who current residents who will lose their homes (those who were flooded out were compensated previously), and remediate the impacted area as permanent open space. The agreement calls for the remaining 67 households to vacate the park upon sale of their homes within three years.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

13. Potential Developments: Cable Mills

Mitchell Properties of Boston, the owners of the Cable Mills property on Water Street, is planning to combine Historic Tax Credits, 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, and a commitment of \$1.5 million in local CPA funds to develop a mixed-income adaptive reuse of the historic mill site near downtown. The project, which has gone through several iterations since 2005, now focuses on creating 61-units of rental housing within the existing Cable Mill building footprint. Thirteen of the rental units would be affordable to residents earning less than 80% of AMI. In addition, the overall development plan calls for a 2nd phase of 20 newly-constructed, for-sale, market-rate units on the property.

The feasibility of this current plan relies heavily upon the demand for high-quality, high-service, market-rate rental housing aimed at area professionals, Williams College alumni, and second home users. The developer expressed confidence that such a market exists and believes that the location and quality of units will also secure demand from local residents and workers who will

qualify for the 13 affordable units. The Historic Tax credits require that all units be rented for a period of five years. After that time, the developer will have the option to sell the market rate units.

Mitchell Properties recently submitted an unsuccessful application to the Department of Housing & Community Development for tax credits to subsidize the 13 affordable units. The developer expressed confidence that they will move forward with the plan and is assessing the funding strategy in light of the unfunded tax-credit application.

As proposed, the Cable Mill development would include three one-bedroom, nine two-bedroom and one three-bedroom unit reserved for residents earning less than 60% of AMI. If developed today, that would result in rents ranging from \$588-\$923/ month. The proposed market rents would be at the top of the Williamstown market: \$1,675 for one-bedroom, \$2,050/month for two-bedroom, and \$2,600/month for three bedroom units.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

14. Summary of Existing Condition

Existing conditions in Williamstown tell a somewhat confounding story. On the one hand, the community is losing population, losing local jobs, losing renter population and seeing far fewer young adults and children live in the community. It has little or no local waiting list for its subsidized non-elderly rental units or Section 8 vouchers. From 2007-2012, the community's median home price has dropped by 28.5%, higher than neighboring communities, the county or the state. The US Census in 2010 reported a rental vacancy rate of over 10%. These are typically the indicators of a market in fairly serious decline. Were these the only indicators, housing funders would likely express serious concern that additional affordable units would negatively impact existing subsidized and market rate housing.

But they are not the only conditions. Rental prices are between 30% and 60% higher than in the surrounding communities of Adams and North Adams; homeownership prices are nearly double those of these neighbors; from 2000-2007, the cost of local apartments and homes increased in value at one of the fastest rates in the Commonwealth; household incomes in town are also growing faster than the county or state and faster than increases in local wages; the current inventory of homes for sale or apartments for rent is low; while at the same time far more households, young and old, are increasingly burdened by the cost of ownership or rental. These

conditions are typically present in expanding markets with high levels of housing need.

Added to this, the destruction of over 150 low cost dwellings at the Spruces Mobile Home Park eliminated much of the community's *de facto* affordable housing stock, especially for older, low-income residents. While that tragedy forced most of those affected to seek housing outside of the community, ample affordable options did exist in nearby towns.

The following highlights some of the key characteristics that impact the consultant's assessment of housing needs:

- Williamstown has been steadily losing its young, low- and moderate-income families. While its elderly population is growing overall, the number of low-income seniors was declining even before the loss of homes at the Spruces. Partly this is a result of the changing demographics of those aging in place and is partly a result of in- and out-migration related at least in part to the cost of housing.
- From 2000-2010, the community lost 800 residents while occupying 183 more housing units. Households are growing smaller and older in Williamstown faster than these same demographic trends are playing out in the state as a whole.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

- While the loss of work-age residents seems clearly related to Williamstown's and North Berkshire's declining job base, it is harder to tie the strength of the local housing market to the job market. It seems far more likely that Williamstown's institutions, cultural and commercial offerings, its continuum of care options for seniors, and the reputation of its school system are driving its appeal to residents able to pay for the higher cost of housing. To the degree that in-migration is coming from urban areas in the Northeast, Williamstown's housing prices still represent a bargain.
- The decade has seen increased pressure on those low- and moderate-income renters and owners still living in the community. Among seniors, nearly 300 households pay at least 35% of their income for housing, more than double the rate of cost burden from 2000. Even though the number of non-elderly renters declined by 100 since 2000, the number paying at least 35% of their income for rent

increased by 89. Currently 35% of all non-elderly renters are burdened by the cost of their housing. Similar increases have impacted non-elderly owners.

In all, Williamstown's existing housing conditions reflect a number of key factors: 1) long-term declines in the economic vitality of the Northern Berkshires; 2) Williamstown's attractiveness to older, wealthier and smaller-sized households; 3) the availability of both subsidized and market rate affordable housing in nearby communities; and 4) the sudden loss of more than 150 *de facto* affordable housing units at The Spruces. The net result of these changes is a community that reflects significantly less age and income diversity than it did as recently as 2000. If Williamstown were an urban neighborhood presenting these demographic changes, it would be seen as "gentrifying," steadily replacing lower-income residents who can find affordable options nearby with higher-income singles and older transplants who bring more assets and income with them than those they are replacing.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

III. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Williamstown's Market Area Context

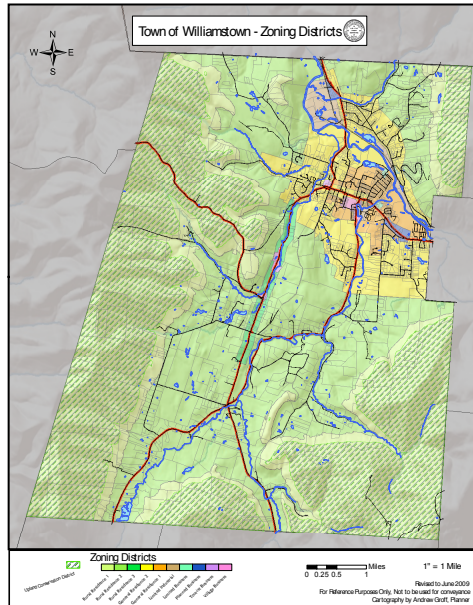
Despite a declining regional economic base, Williamstown remains an attractive community in which to live, to work and, increasingly, to retire. More than 62% of working residents work in town, double the statewide average. Perhaps even more tellingly, 77% of Williams College faculty lives in town, while 48% of administrative staff, and only 27% of its support staff reside where they work. Clearly many of those who work in town, live here if they can. Given its significantly higher home prices and household incomes, Williamstown also appears to be increasingly the community of choice for professionals in the northern Berkshire County.

Another key characteristic defining the Williamstown housing market is the relatively low cost of housing in the neighboring communities of Adams and North Adams. Figure III.1 looks at where employees in several of Williamstown's largest employers live and helps define the communities impacted by the Williamstown housing market. Clearly the community with the largest number of commuting workers is North Adams. Between 750-1,000 workers commute in either direction for work in the two communities. There appears to be a direct correlation

between the concentration of low wage jobs an employer offers and the concentration of workers commuting from North Adams to Williamstown. Adams plays a similar but secondary role, offering fewer rental properties but providing a nearby supply of more affordable ownership opportunities.

North Adams and Adams are the two communities that most directly impact Williamstown's market, largely because they provide an affordable alternative to living in Williamstown for those who cannot afford to do so. As mentioned in the previous section, rents in these two communities are 30-60% lower than in Williamstown, while ownership costs are less than half of what they are in Williamstown. Other communities like Pownal and Bennington in Vermont; Clarksburg, and Pittsfield; and Hoosick Falls and Petersburg in eastern Rensselaer County in New York each has a small influence on the Williamstown market. According to housing professionals, Williamstown is clearly a community of choice for the majority of professional and higher income retirees relocating to the market area.

The development pattern within Williamstown largely divides between Town Center/ Village zoning on the one hand and outlying low-density development on the other. The Town Center/ Village zoning districts (*shown in yellow on the map to the left*) have public utilities and combine commercial development and residential development



along the main thoroughfares, with typically small lot residential development in the rest of the village. All of the existing affordable housing developments, larger scale multi-family properties, as well as all of the proposed development parcels examined

below fall within the Town Center area.

Figure III.1.

COMMUNITY OF RESIDENCE FOR MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Williamstown, MA, February 2013

	Williams-town	North Adams, MA	Adams, MA	Clarksburg, Bennington or Pownal	Other
Williams College	47.8%	16.8%	6.6%	8.2%	20.6%
Town of Williamstown	48.5%	18.0%	7.3%	10.3%	18.9%
Clark Art Institute	57.5%	12.5%	6.0%	6.5%	17.5%
Williams Inn	17.8%	44.6%	7.0%	14.0%	16.6%
Pine Cobble School	39.4%	27.3%	33.3%		
Countryside Landscape	12.7%	17.0%	12.7%	57.6%	

SOURCE: Data collected from employers as provided by WAHC

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

2. Projecting Demographic & Economic Trends

Several state agencies have projected population, housing and employment data for the Town and/or County through 2020. Like so much of the demographic data, they present a conflicting picture of the Town's future.

Population & Households

- A recent MA Department of Transportation (MaDOT) study estimates that Williamstown's population will grow by 155 residents or 2.0% to 7,900 between 2010 and 2020. This compares with a countywide decline of 4.0%. *Note: The Berkshire Regional Planning Office provided this information with the disclaimer that BRA staff considers the MaDOT projections to be overly optimistic in terms of growth. The population includes students.*
- In 2003, the MA State Data Center (MISER) projected Williamstown's population for 2010 and 2020. MISER's low estimate for the Town accurately predicted the 2010 population. MISER's 2020 low estimate projects Williamstown's 2020 population at 7,145 or 610 fewer residents than in 2010 (-7.9%). By comparison, its most accurate projection for the county from 2000-2010 calls for Berkshire County to lose 3.2% of its population between 2010-2020.

- The MaDOT data projects that Williamstown will grow by only 16 households reversing slightly the decline in household size. *Note: The MISER data did not project households or household size.*

Age Distribution

- The MISER study projects that by 2020, 1,775 or 24.8% of all Williamstown residents will be 65 and over. In their model, seniors increase by 176 over the ten-year period even as overall population declines by more than 600 residents. Again this includes Williams College students.
- The MISER projections call for a 4.8% decline in children under the age of 18 in Williamstown by 2020. At the same time, Williamstown Superintendent's Office, projects public school enrollment to rise from 285 in 2013 to 315 in 2020.

Jobs

- A 2012 MA Department of Workforce Development study looked at job changes countywide from 2010 to 2020. They project a 2.6 percent increase in overall employment over the course of the decade for Berkshire County. This would undo most of the job losses experienced in from 2000-2009.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

- The ten job classifications projected to have the most growth in Berkshire County over the decade include only one relatively high paying job (financial managers +69), five moderately paid jobs (customer service reps, insurance sales agents, insurance processing clerks, first line office supervisors, and fitness instructors +411 combined), and four low-wage occupations (general office clerks, personal care aides, tellers, grounds-keeping and landscape workers, +635 combined). The ten job types most likely to decline fastest in the decade include three moderate paying occupations (police officers, carpenters, and 1st line retail supervisors -191

combined), with the remaining seven coming from low wage occupations in retail and food service (-763 combined). Overall, 24% of the net gain is in high paying work, 65% in moderate wage jobs, and 11% in low-wage jobs.

In all, the consultant finds none of these conflicting projections compelling enough to believe that the key trends of declining population and job base, aging population, and increased income stratification will change significantly through 2020.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

3. Local Perspectives

Local housing professionals interviewed for this project agree on two things: 1) without new jobs, the capacity of the town to support new housing is limited; and 2) that said, Williamstown remains an attractive place to live. For some, the combination of an aging population and few other areas of job growth suggested that more and more jobs in the area will be relatively low wage health and social service jobs oriented toward seniors living in their own homes. In a regional market with a relatively large stock of affordable housing, few of these low wage

jobholders will likely live in Williamstown. Local housing professionals were split in their opinion of whether the perceived “gentrification” of Williamstown was a good or bad development, though most acknowledged it was occurring. There was some concern about older homeowners and their ability to remain in the community without more age appropriate housing options. Several remarked, for example, that half of the units in both senior developments were in 2nd floor walk up buildings, thus not wholly appropriate to an aging population.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

4. Housing Needs

The key gaps in housing affordability that indicate some level of need may be summarized by type of housing as follows:

A. Housing to Address Needs of Displaced Spruces Residents

The following summarizes key need characteristics for displaced residents of the Spruces Mobile Home Park:

- Little more than 10% of those initially displaced from the Spruces Mobile Home Park found alternative housing in Williamstown. More than half still live within the county.
- Another 67 current Spruces households will be required to find alternate housing once the park closes entirely.
- More than 90% of those who lived at the Spruces at the time of the flood, would be income-eligible for affordable housing options should those options become available. At least 2/3s of these residents would qualify for senior housing options.
- 33 Spruces households have indicated an interest to the Town that they would like to find alternate housing in the community.
- In the months after the flood, the Williamstown Housing Authority gave priority to Spruces residents seeking housing. Only a relatively few residents applied (14), all were given the opportunity to occupy an available unit within 16 months of the flood, and only a few (4) actually did move in. Another 10-12 moved to available subsidized housing in North Adams.

Given the age of the displaced residents, Williamstown's success at returning Spruces residents to housing in town will likely decline as a function of both how long it takes to create replacement housing and how different it is from the original mobile home park concept. From a strictly marketing perspective, the most desirable outcome for the largest segment of the Spruce's population would be to replace the Spruces with resident-owned and managed mobile home park in Town. That option does not appear to be on the table at this time.

Figure III.2 represents the consultant's estimate (based on the data provided, discussions with local housing professionals, and his own experienced judgment) of the potential to retain and return Spruce's residents based on the type and timing of replacement housing. It is important to note that this estimates assumes residents' net payments will be roughly comparable to their monthly payments prior to flood. As the cost of housing alternative rise above pre-flood levels, participation will likely fall.

Figure III.2.

ESTIMATE OF SPRUCES RESIDENTS RETAINED & RETURNED TO TOWN

Based on Type and Timing of Replacement Housing
March 2013

	Resident- owned Mobile Home Park	New Subsidized Ownership Cottages	New Subsidized Rental Cottages	New Subsidized Senior Apartment Complex	Existing Senior Housing
2014	90	90	42	15	5
2015	75	75	32	12	4
2016	60	60	24	8	3
2017	40	40	16	5	3

Current & Displaced Spruces Households

SOURCE: Development Cycles, April 2013

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

In the consultant's view, a new resident-owned mobile home park could hope to attract as many as 90 former Spruces households if it were ready for occupancy in 2014. If the development process took until 2017 (a far more like scenario) only about 40 prior residents could be relied upon to return.

Physically the concept of clustered detached cottages with private yard space could prove an attractive alternative to the mobile home, especially if they provided ownership opportunity at monthly costs close to residents' pre-flood levels. In the consultant's view, such a prospect will prove extremely challenging to accomplish given his understanding of costs and the existing array of potential funding sources. Still, if it proves feasible, it would likely attract as many former Spruces residents as a resident-owned mobile home park would.

Potentially more feasible from a development standpoint would be a rental model based on such a

detached cottage concept. In the consultant's view, the shift to a subsidized rental model will significantly reduce its appeal to mobile home owners, both for the lack of ownership title and for the added rules and regulations inherent in a subsidized rental development. Despite the reality that for many of the Spruces residents homeownership may no longer be a realistic option, the consultant would expect the demand for rental cottages to be less than half that of a comparably priced ownership option.

The options of more traditionally styled senior housing or occupancy in existing senior housing as vacancies occur will likely prove even less attractive to Spruces residents as time goes on.

One important issue to balance in any discussion of replacement housing is how to develop something that works for the displaced Spruces residents and also serves the long-term needs of the community.

B. Housing to Address Needs of Non-elderly Renter Households

The following summarizes key need characteristics for non-elderly renter households:

- Williamstown is home to an estimated 360 non-elderly renter households with incomes below the 80% of AMI of whom roughly 250 earn less than 50% of AMI. Williamstown offers enough subsidized rental housing and housing vouchers to house 40% of the Very Low Income population. The unsubsidized private market offers relatively little housing that the remaining 150 Very Low Income non-elderly rental households can afford without utilizing more than 30% of their income.
- An estimated 174 non-elderly renters currently pay at least 35% of their income for rent. Only 47% of current renters could afford to rent a median priced one-bedroom unit using no more than 30% of their income for rent. That percentage drops to 27% for renters trying to affordably rent a median-priced three-bedroom unit.
- Williamstown current rents indicate that the community carries a 30-60% premium in cost over similarly sized apartments in Adams and North Adams.
- The 38 subsidized family units represent 6% of the town's overall rental stock and provide affordable

housing for only about 10% of the non-elderly households who would qualify for such housing.

- Williamstown's share of renter households under age 35 and its share of renter households with children present are dramatically lower than county or statewide levels. These numbers dropped precipitously between 2000-2010.

Not all of the current conditions' findings suggest that there is a need for more affordable rental units for non-elderly renters:

- Census data reports a declining population, and declining renter occupancy levels.
- The number of local jobs dropped by 336 or 8%. Service and government jobs in addition to manufacturing jobs all declined.
- The WHA administers 74 Section 8 vouchers covering about 15% of the private market units in town., a significantly higher share than for the county or state.

Note: There is some overlap between Sec 8 vouchers and existing subsidized rental developments.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

- Little or no waiting list exists for the two family rental projects, both of which have current, short-term vacancies. *Note: This may be as much a function of outreach as need.*
- Though vacancies in other North Berkshire communities does not directly speak to needs in Williamstown, the addition of new family units in

Taking all of this into account, the consultant sees Williamstown as a community whose economic base although slowly declining could support the addition of more affordable rental housing units. How many more units represent need is essentially a question that can only be answered based on local values. Still, the consultant offers “subsidized units as a percentage of all renters who would be eligible for those units” as a single metric for judging non-elderly renter need. Taken together, all of the Commonwealth’s communities provide enough subsidized non-elderly



Williamstown will raise questions of what impact those units may have on existing affordable housing options regionally.

All of these counter indications will raise at least some concerns for funders underwriting any new rental development.

housing to house about 20% of non-elderly renters earning less than 80% of AMI. To match that statewide average,

Williamstown would need to provide 72 subsidized rental units; it currently provides 38 units. The 34 additional non-elderly renter units needed to house 20% of its non-elderly renter population earning less than 80% of AMI represents the upper limit of what the consultant

sees for the community’s non-elderly renter housing need for the foreseeable future.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

C. Need for Elderly Rental Housing

The following summarizes key need characteristics for subsidized elderly rental housing:

- There are 22 Williamstown resident households (and 28 total households) on the WHA's waiting list for senior housing at Meadowvale, a senior housing project that turns over only 2-3 units/year.
- There are 23 Williamstown resident households (and 44 total households) on the waiting list for Proprietor's Fields. The number of Williamstown residents on the waiting list has declined by 11 households in the past year.
Note: some overlap certainly exists between these two developments
- Close to half of the units in these two senior developments include walk-up 2nd floor units.
- From 2007-2011, an average of 286 senior households in Williamstown were paying more than 35% of their gross income for housing: this includes 216 senior owners (nearly triple the number in 2000) and 70 renter households.
- During this same period, more than 500 senior households not already living in subsidized senior housing earned less than 80% of AMI and thus would qualify for such housing if they chose to seek that option. The vast majority of these households

own their home. If as little as 2.5 percent of these households sought senior housing in town annually, they would increase demand on the two existing projects by 12.5-units/ year. These developments only average eight units of turnover/year and have multi-year waiting lists already. Within seven years, the pent up demand for senior housing from local residents at a 2.5% penetration rate would represent at least 30 units of need even if every available unit in Meadowvale and Proprietors Fields went to a Williamstown senior.

- From 2007-2011, Williamstown provided subsidized rental housing for about 15% of its senior households earning less than 80% of AMI. Statewide, subsidized elderly housing serves roughly 25% of seniors earning below 80% of AMI. It could be viewed that the Spruce's Mobile Home Park provided the affordable option that filled that gap. To reach parity with the rest of the state using this metric, Williamstown would need to increase the number of elderly housing units in the community from 90 to 144 or by 54 units.

Note: as the data covers the period prior to the flooding at the Spruces, any subsidized replacement housing for Spruces residents should be considered part of the need for additional subsidized elderly units.

D. Need for Affordable First Time Homeownership

The following summarizes key need characteristics for affordable homeownership opportunities:

- Williamstown's median single-family home price, \$267,000 in 2012, is more than double that of North Adams and Adams, and more than 55% higher than the median for the county as a whole.
 - In the past three years, 187 single-family homes and 28 condominiums sold on the open market in Williamstown. Twenty-two percent of these sales were for less than \$150,000.
 - Utilizing conventional fixed-rate financing and underwriting standards, the following percentage of the town's single family stock would be affordable to a household at 80% of AMI based on its assessed value: for a 1-person household 9.3%; two-persons 18.9%; three persons 29.6%; four persons 38.0%.
 - Utilizing the higher buying power available through a program such as the MHP's Soft Second Program, the percentage of the town's single-family housing affordable to households at the 80% of AMI level grows significantly: 1-person 30.0%; two-persons 40.1%; three persons 46.8%; four persons 54.0%.
 - When looking at homes on the market in February 2013, the availability of affordable housing in the community is quite limited. Using conventional 30-year financing only 6.0% of homes on the market were affordable to a household of one at 80% of AMI. Availability rose to 20.0% of homes for a family of four. Using the Soft Second program, a first-time buyer could access between 20-30% of homes on the market. With their monthly fees and higher mortgage insurance requirements, condominiums are actually less affordable at a given sales price than are single-family homes. Only 8%-24% of condominiums on the market are affordable to buyers at 80% of AMI.
- Is there a need for more affordable homeownership opportunity?** More than the other areas of need this is a highly subjective issue based on definitions of need. Certainly, the range of housing available to households earning less than 80% of AMI is declining, and the housing available to first time buyers is far more limited than in surrounding communities. Still, the options in

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Williamstown are better than in much of the Commonwealth. And the resources available to address homeownership need are far more limited than they have been in the past. There is probably no action that could improve the availability of first time homeownership in Town than to reenergize the availability and awareness of the Soft Second Program.

E. Other Homeownership Needs

Though not typically viewed as an affordable housing need, Williamstown has a number of characteristics that suggest the need for moderately priced, market rate

ownership housing specifically designed to meet the needs of seniors as they age beyond the needs and upkeep requirements of their owned single-family homes. With over 400 owners over 65 living alone, largely in single family homes, the limited supply of housing options that combine accessibility, ease of maintenance, convenience to services, adaptability for handicapped access represents one area of significant need. The private market may need some incentive or assistance to provide such an option at a price affordable to moderate income homeowners. This is a need that could be paired with efforts to serve displaced Spruces' residents.

Table III.1.8

HOMEOWNERSHIP AFFORDABILITY

Williamstown 2013

What Household at 80% of AMI Can Afford

HH Size	Income @ 80% AMI	PITI	Down Payment	Condo Fee	30-Yr Fixed @ 5.5%		MHP Soft Second Program	
					SF Max	Condo Max	SF Max	Condo Max
1	\$45,500	\$1,251	\$15,000	\$200/ month	\$146,520	\$116,520	\$201,520	\$159,620
2	\$52,000	\$1,430	\$15,000	\$200/ month	\$173,420	\$143,320	\$234,920	\$197,120
3	\$58,500	\$1,608	\$15,000	\$200/ month	\$200,220	\$170,220	\$267,220	\$231,120
4	\$65,000	\$1,787	\$15,000	\$200/ month	\$227,020	\$197,020	\$299,520	\$263,420

% Single Family Homes Assessed at Affordable Price

HH Size	30-Yr Fixed @ 5.5%	MHP Soft Second Program
1	9.3%	30.0%
2	18.9%	40.1%
3	29.6%	46.8%
4	38.0%	54.0%

Percent of Homes On Market at Affordable Price

30-Yr Fixed @ 5.5%		MHP Soft Second Program	
Single Family	Condo	Single Family	Condo
6%	0%	20%	8%
12%	4%	22%	16%
20%	12%	24%	16%
20%	16%	30%	24%

SOURCE: HudUser.org Income Limits, MHP Housing Cost Calculator, Williamstown Appraiser's Report, CHAS Data Sets 2005-2009, MLS Listings (www.realtor.com), 1/27/13. **NOTE:** PITI stands for Principal, Interest, Taxes & Insurance. Down Payment and Condo Fees represent model assumptions suggested by consultant.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

5. Options for Addressing Needs

The WAHC invited the consultant to review five potential development sites and plans in place in January 2013. The following represent quick summaries of his response to the potential for each site to serve the housing needs identified. The five sites included 1) the Cable Mills Factory site and development plan by Mitchell properties; 2) the Higher Ground site and conceptual plan on property owned by Williams College abutting the Proprietors Fields development; 3) the Lowry property and conceptual plan for Irene Cottages; 4) a town-owned parcel at 59 Water Street known as the Old Town Garage site; and 5) the PhoTec Mill site off Cole Avenue.

Cable Mills

The current Mitchell Property plan calls for 13 affordable units rented to households earning below 80% of AMI as part of a 52-unit luxury rental development. The tax-credit rents would be close to the median market rate rents in the community. Without commenting on the feasibility of the market-rate component of the plan, the 13-proposed affordable units would clearly address rental needs of working individuals, couples and families. Its proposed quality, management package, and high-end neighbors, and its proximity to Williams College and downtown Williamstown make it a pretty ideal location for affordable rentals.

Higher Ground

The Higher Ground conceptual plan calls for a mixed-use rental development on a roughly five-acre parcel belonging to Williams College and located behind the Proprietors Fields elderly housing. A conceptual plan prepared for Higher Ground by Kuhn Riddle Architects in January 2013 calls for one elevator-served 40-unit building with 30 one-bedroom and 10 two-bedroom apartments and 1,200 square feet of common space. The parcel would also house 12-units of townhouse apartments for non-elderly renters. These townhouses would be a mix of two and three-bedroom apartments. While the development plan for this project has not been finalized and negotiations over the site are ongoing, funding requirements will likely mean that most if not all of the units will need to meet tax-credit pricing limits making them affordable to residents earning less than 60% of AMI. This location and general plan should be highly marketable for both elderly and non-elderly rental housing components. The mix of one- and two-bedroom units in the elderly component should also be an attractive asset. The developers will need to pay close attention to the mix of incomes served in the elderly portion to ensure that as large a range of residents as possible can qualify for the housing to ensure that the scale of the project matches the need. The non-elderly townhouse units will best meet the need by aiming to serve the lowest incomes levels possible.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Lowry Property

The WAHC has been pursuing permission for the Town to re-purpose a 30-acre parcel of town-own conversation land to provide the site for a cluster development of roughly 40 detached “Irene Cottages,” with the primary purpose being to offer replacement housing for 67 current residents of the Spruces Mobile Homes park with a secondary purpose of helping relocate any household in the park that was displaced by Tropical Storm Irene. The likeliest development scenario will be to offer the units as subsidized rentals.

The consultant is aware of the debate over the development of this property and has limited his remarks only to the capacity of the site to serve the intended housing need. As indicated earlier, the concept of a clustered site with free standing buildings and individual yard areas represents one of the key characteristics needed to appeal to mobile home owners. If built at this location such a project would have market appeal not only to Spruces residents but to a range of both elderly and non-elderly residents seeking detached, single-story living at an affordable price. It is a site that will have appeal to prospective residents under either a rental or ownership model (though as stated earlier, its appeal to Spruces residents will diminish under a rental development). It will be up to the Town to determine whether this parcel should continue as conservation land or whether it serves a higher purpose in meeting the need that exists for housing to

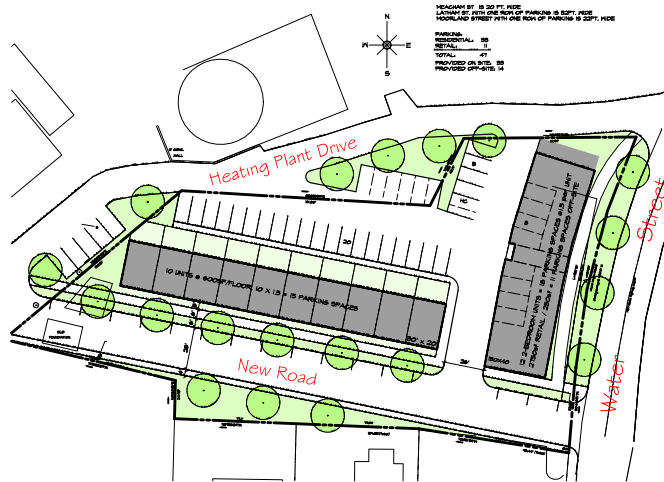
replace the Spruces and other identified needs. The consultant can only say that 1) the concept of clustered, affordable, detached, single-floor living with private yard space addresses the nature of housing need for several groups; and 2) the Stratton Road site has the essential characteristics needed to attract Spruces residents and others to such a concept. The consultant was not in possession of enough information about the cost of site development or the funding sources proposed to entertain an informed opinion on the financial viability of a specific 40-unit “Irene Cottages plan.

59 Water Street

This 1.3-acre town-owned site represents an attractive in-Town, in-fill location for a small multi-family rental development. It could work either as family or non-family housing. From both a marketing and development perspective the site appears appropriate to development of this type and scale. The central location, access to the Town’s main employer, and proximity to recreational space across Water Street all enhance its marketability.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee



PhoTec Mill Site

This 4.8 acre town-owned site abutting the Hoosic River along Cole Avenue includes the shell of the central PhoTec mill building. The Town has made some efforts to offer the property for housing in the past decade but none have proceeded. There may be developable land above

the flood plain at the south side of the property that backs up the the houses on Mill Street. The town is awaiting the results of as assessment of the viability of the structure and cost to demolish compared to the cost to repurpose it. Schemes may evolve to utilize either or both the land and the building in time. Still, the idea of developing affordable housing this close to the river as a response to the damage wrought by that same river less than a mile downstream seems inappropriate at this time, especially when there are more appropriate sites available to address the current and foreseeable need.

Summary

The following Table summarizes the consultants view of the attractiveness of each of the five sites to meet the identified housing needs.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Williamstown Affordable Housing Committee

Type of Housing	Scale of Projected Need through 2020	Cable Mills	Higher Ground	Lowry Property	59 Water Street	PhoTec Site
Replacement Cottages for Spruces Residents	24-32 (as Rental)	Poor	Good	Very Good	Poor	Poor
Affordable Rentals for Non-elderly	28-34	Excellent	Excellent	Very Good	Very Good	Poor
Affordable Rental Complex for Elderly	36-54 (including Spruces)	Excellent	Excellent	Mediocre	Very Good	Poor
Affordable Homeownership	Up to 15 (based on definition of need)	Excellent: though not currently offered	Excellent	Excellent	Good	Good
Moderately Priced Senior Ownership	20-30 including Spruces	Excellent: though not currently offered	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Mediocre